

## 8. Learning to Live as a Godly Wife

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to follow the example of Christ. Christ gave us a perfect example throughout His life. However, His greatest example came at the time that He went to the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. The things that Christ did gave us an example for our lives of what it means to be willing to suffer so that others might have the opportunity to hear how to receive eternal life. Today, we are going to see how the Lord uses the life of a godly wife to draw her husband to Christ if he is not a Christian.

When a married couple does not hear about the death and resurrection of Christ until they are adults, many times the wife will become a Christian before her husband becomes a Christian. That is true in our day, just as it was true in the time that Peter wrote the book of 1 Peter. That is why 1 Peter 3:1-2 says, “Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear.” Here, we see that, just as the previous verses mentioned that household servants are to be submissive to their masters, a Christian wife is to be submissive to her husband. We saw that to “be submissive” means “*to place your full potential at the disposal of another.*”

Here, we see that when wives have a submissive attitude, the Lord often uses that attitude to draw the non-Christian husband to Christ. That is why such wives are told to be submissive to their own husband (rather than to a leader in the church). The word that is translated “obey not” is usually translated believe not or unbelieving because it refers to a person who refuses to allow one’s self to be persuaded. In John 3:36 we read, “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” In this verse, it is translated “*he who does not believe.*” Here, we see that there are times when a husband is refusing to let himself be persuaded by the words of other Christians.

Here, we see that many times a wife can do what other Christians cannot do, and such husbands will be won by the changed behavior of their wives. The word that is translated “observe” is only used one other time in the New Testament and means “*to watch closely.*” That use is in 1 Peter 2:12 where we read, “Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” Here, we see that Christians draw others to Christ by their changed actions because unbelievers are watching closely. The behavior that a husband really notices in his wife is her chaste conduct when it is demonstrated by godly reverence.

The word that is translated “chaste” means “*actions that are pure from any fault.*” This speaks about a wife who is growing in godly character so that the husband can see the changes in the inner attitudes that Christ is developing in her life. James 3:17-18 say, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” Here, we see that growth in godly character produces that purity of life that leads a husband to Christ.

We see that those godly inner attitudes are contrasted with those who just try to change their outward appearance. 1 Peter 3:3-4 says, “Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel--rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” Many women in the world only try to change their outward appearance and never think about their inner attitudes. Three common areas that women in the world try to change are used to illustrate the difference between outward beauty and inner beauty. Women who are not Christians focus on changing the outward beauty by what they do with their hair, the wearing of jewelry or the wearing of expensive clothes. They usually do not think of inner beauty as well.

In contrast, Peter here reminds Christian wives of the tremendous value of focusing on the inward beauty of godly character. The Bible has much to say about the development of the heart (inner person). God told Samuel in 1 Samuel 16:7, “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord does not see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’” People do look at the outward appearance. However, God will also cause a husband who is not a Christian to begin to notice the changes of the heart of his wife as the wife grows in godly character.

This passage goes on to describe that beauty of the heart by describing the beauty of the heart as incorruptible beauty. The word that is translated “incorruptible” means “*that which cannot corrupt or decay.*” 1 Peter 1:4 says, “To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.” This verse refers to our eternal inheritance. It also describes the inner beauty of godly character. In the sight of God, such character is incorruptible, undefiled and does not fade away.

Two words are used to describe that inner beauty of a godly wife. First, we see that such a woman has a gentle spirit. Matthew 21:5 says, “‘Tell the daughter of Zion, behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” In this verse, we see that the word is translated “lowly.” Another word for a “gentle spirit” is “humility.” Gentleness toward God means “*that we accept the things that He allows in our lives as good.*” As a result, we accept them instead of resisting them. A gentle, humble or lowly person does not focus on himself or herself at all. Instead, such a person yields the control to the Holy Spirit to work as He chooses.

The second word that describes such a woman says she has a “quiet spirit.” The word that is translated “quiet” means “*peaceable or quiet.*” The only other place that this word is used in the New Testament is in 1 Timothy 2:2, where we read that we are to pray, “For kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” When a non-Christian husband has a wife who has a humble and quiet spirit, he begins to place great value on her life. This verse also tells us that God places a great value on a wife who has these attitudes.

God led Peter to use an Old Testament illustration to show the great value that God places on a woman with a gentle and quiet spirit. 1 Peter 3:5-6 says, “For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,

as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.” Of all of the women mentioned in the Old Testament, the one God chose to illustrate a gentle and quiet spirit was Sarah. However, these verses show us that many other Old Testament women had this same spirit. A key thing to notice about all of these women was that they trusted in God and allowed Him to work in and through their lives.

We see that such women were described as holy women. The word that is translated “holy” is used two hundred and twenty-nine times in the New Testament and is nearly always translated “holy” or “saints.” When used of people, it is always used to speak of those who had their faith in God. In the New Testament, we see that we become saints at the moment we repent of our sin of unbelief and place our faith in Christ. The word that is translated “adorned” means “*to prepare, to get ready or to put in order.*” In Revelation 21:2, John wrote, “Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” In Titus 2:10, we read, “Not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.” Here, we see that servants are to adorn the doctrine of God by their godly behavior. God says that godly wives adorn themselves by their godly behavior.

The Old Testament women chose to be submissive to their own husbands. Sarah is a perfect illustration of this submissive attitude. There is only one place in the Old Testament where it is recorded that Sarah called Abraham “lord”. In Genesis 18:10-12, God spoke to Abraham, “And He said, ‘I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.’ (Sarah was listening in the tent door which *was* behind him.) Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, ‘After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?’” Abraham was 99 years old and Sarah was 89 years old. God told Abraham that Sarah would have a son in her old age. That is the one recorded instance where Sarah called Abraham “lord.” That answer in that context points to the fact that Sarah chose to show a submissive attitude both toward God and toward Abraham (even though it meant having a baby at 90 years of age).

As a result, we see that Sarah is an example, and a spiritual mother, to all Christian women who show a gentle and quiet spirit. That is why God says that such an attitude is of great value. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to develop that same spirit in their lives. Then, their lives will be an example to others and will help others to develop that same spirit. They will also be able to teach women how to live as godly wives even when such women have a husband who is not yet a Christian. As we have seen, God will work through that attitude to win many husbands to Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to develop a gentle and quiet spirit.